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On "Trust and Being True": Toward a Genealogy of Morals

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Abstract This Nietzschesque "genealogy of morals" presents the Confucian virtue of *xin* (trust and true) so basic to friendship as a civic virtue rooted among social equals. Among non-equals, a servant has to prove his trustworthiness but not yet vice versa. The script 信 (*xin*) tells of living up to one's words. *Yanxing* 言行 (speech and action) describes actively keeping a verbal promise. The Agrarian school endorses *xin* as the primary virtue in its utopia of virtual equals. It knew oral trust and had no use for written covenants. In debating Mencius, Gaozi kept to that earlier primacy granted public speech as tied to one's social reputation. Mencius turned inward and elevated mind as the inner good of moral intent instead. In the *Doctrine of the Mean*, inner *xin* would expand outward into becoming the ultimate truth, the sincerity of Heaven and Earth. The essay ends on an aside on the case of the Cretan Liar.

Keywords Trust and true · Gaozi · Mencius · The Cretan Liar

Of the five human relationships in Confucian society, friendship is deemed fifth. Correlated with friendship is the virtue of *xin* 信 (trust or truthfulness) (Lai 1996). This essay attempts to review the classical history of this virtue. If Aristotle distinguishes history from poetry—one is about "what happened" and the other is about "what could have happened based on knowledge of the general principles on how humans behave"—then this history is informed by poetry.

1 The Etymology of Xin: Homo Politicus et Symbolicus

The ideogram *xin* is made up of *ren* 人 (a human person) and *yan* 言 (speech). It paints this picture of a person "standing by (his) words." It is about promise keeping, or how *yan* (speech) should go with x*ing* 行 (deed). Basic between friends, it is also requisite of any

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communal life. We speak and we mean what we speck. It is about being truthful. To be truthful means not to lie (not bear false witness). As such, it is both descriptive of reality or what is true and prescriptive in working to bring about the true. So it is not surprising that it covers both the initial act (giving one's words) and its final completion (a promise well kept). The Chinese could thus equate *xin* and *cheng* 誠, the pictogram for the latter being "speech + completion."

We find all that formulation in the *Analects* of Confucius. There the equation of *yan* and *xin*g, speech and deed, is presumed. *Xin* is not just actions matching prior promise. It is also speech running ahead of itself and promoting its fulfillment. Therefore a person's words (*yan*) are his reputation (same word *yan* 言) and reputation is simply his having cultivated a habit of keeping his words. A gentleman's words are therefore gold. And the emperor's mouth is called the "golden mouth" because a king can never go back on his words, and what he says (a royal decree) is "as well be done." Trust is such a foundational virtue though, as Arthur Waley has shown, all that is said about the Chinese gentleman, we find also in the English language for describing the English gentleman. There too, a man is his words or is only "as good as his words" such that his words (viz. his reputation) also precede him wherever he goes. That is why a gentleman should always be very careful about what issues forth from his mouth (Confucian saying), which, to quote the wit of Oscar Wilde, is "the Importance of being Earnest" (Victorian dictum).

However, if that is the case—if the Chinese and the English gentleman are so alike—we have a problem. What can I say about this virtue that would be unique to classical China? Worse, what more can I say beyond what is said above that virtually exhausts all the aphorisms on *xin* in the *Analects*? Some virtues (like "honesty") are so self-explanatory (it is the habit of "not lying") and so transparent (society cannot be based "on a lie") that after a while, there seems to be little more we can say. (And *xin* is about honesty.) We will however be taking a clue from Nietzsche whose genealogy of morals has shown how what is obvious might not be. Virtue, he found, was once descriptive of Power such that "nobility" was once tied to a "noble class," which means that before the morals were remade by a civil or civilian society, there was once a different set of values tied to an ethos of a warrior elite. A genealogy of morals would need to uncover such a layer or layers of ethical reformation. When applied to classical China, this would require us to likewise deconstruct our common assumption about *xin.* Before it became a universal virtue expected of all *homo politicus*, it too was specific to a class and a time.

Even the *Analects* preserves a faint memory of how *xin*, a virtue of the "son of lords," was not something accessible as easily to women and the "inferior people" (the servile class).[1] In a bold retrieval of the Ur-Text (*The Original Analects*) by Bruce and Taeko Brooks, the earliest chapter (what is now chapter four) still remembered that warrior elite and its ethos (Brooks and Brooks 1998). But by about the middle of the *Analects* ("middle *Analects*" for short, viz. chapters 12, 13, and 2 as reconstructed by the Brooks; these are chapters compiled at Lu 魯 after Mencius had found success in Qi 齊) (Brooks and Brooks 1998), the discourse on *xin* as related to "speech and deed" hit a peak and took an overly cautious turn. This coincided with the rise of the scholar-official who had then good cause to be extra cautious about (any inadvertent) speech that might jeopardize his career, now that as a stipend officer, he was responsible for any performance not up to promise (see for example 2.13). In the later chapters of the *Analects*, the discourse on *yanxing* 言行 even petered out.

[1] Confucius found women and inferior people harder to teach. They are proverbially unreliable. In a personal communication, Bruce Brooks noted that in China as in Greece, the distrust of slaves and women is not over their genetic make-up but the limited world and range of knowledge they had.

I cite the above work by the Brooks not to replicate their findings but to show how idea about virtues does change. I will offer a different reading on why the middle *Analects* (or why Mencius) aggravated the discourse on "speech and deed." In retrieving the warrior ethos that denied women and slaves easy access to *xin*, my intention is not to perpetuate that sexist and elitist bias but rather to show how men at one time (and still now) do not speak to women or slaves as equals (as "man to man"). Because the rule of "promise keeping" does not apply to non-equals, a slave cannot take his master to court for a breach of promise.[2] Virtues were not universal, not until after Confucius enfranchised all men into being potential gentlemen capable of being *ren* (humane, noble) and being obligated by *xin* to all alike.

2 The Syntax and Grammar of *Zhongxin* 忠信: Beyond Friends in High Places

We can catch that expansion of trustworthy humanity by considering a frequent compound of *xin* with *zhong* 忠. *Zhongxin* as a single virtue appears throughout the *Analects*. Read universally as an internalized virtue, it is as often translated "integrity and truthfulness." Commentators made much of the script *zhong* (integrity: "heart + middle") so that it denotes a "devotion" to task or performing at all times (to wit) "with all thy heart, soul, and might." As such, it needs no human object as "loyalty to so-and-so." But before *zhongxin* became a universal virtue, they were two virtues that were at once status-specific and asymmetrical. The evolution from one to the other may be seen as following this progression: (a) *zhongxin* was hierarchic before it became egalitarian; (b) it was part of a warrior ethos before it became (c) a civilian virtue (Lai 1986) that is universal, until it (d) got absorbed into the Golden Rule of *zhongshu* 忠恕. The sequence of shifts can be mapped with this diagram:

	warrior zhongxin	civilian zhongxin	
most hierarchic	(a) loyalty toward lord who in turn placed trust on the steward-servant	(c) integrity and truthfulness, lateral not hierarchic, esp. with like-class friends	
	+		
	(b) loyalty to a common cause but deceit toward the enemy is legitimate	(d) integrity and reciprocity as universal Golden Rule in all dyadic relationships	most dyadic

In (a), loyalty is that of a servant toward his lord; for his proven devotion, the lord then entrusts him with a task, often a steward overseeing other servants. Evidence supporting this comes from the expressions *zhongchen* 忠臣 for a loyal minister and *xinpu* 信僕 for a trusted aide. The idea that a ruler should work to earn the trust (*xin*) of his people is an innovative idea that appears in *Analects* 12.7 (in Brooks and Brooks 1998). But that could not be the norm before, when kings (like Messiahs) came to rule and be served—not to slave or to serve. King Wen 文 of Zhou might have *xintian* 信天 (the expression then meant being compliant to the will of Heaven, *shuntian* 順天) as to win the "trust" of Heaven (be entrusted with the rule).[3]

[2] The slave has no recourse if his master should go back on his words. That situation was changed only in Roman society when some slaves rose into respectability through patronage.

[3] Because the word *xin* was still being used, with its etymological root meaning of "trusting in the words of men," *xintian youming* 信天由命 meant just *shuntian* or compliance with Heaven and accepting one's Fate. The religious usage of *xin* as "having faith in" is supposed to appear for the first time in the *Mingfolun* 明佛論 (*On Illuminating the Buddhahood*), a Buddhist treatise by the layman Zong Bing 宗炳 in the early fifth century C.E.

Indeed his virtuous reign served the people well. But it would take a Mencius to remake that into a scenario of the Mandate of Heaven resting upon the approval of the people such that the ruler would need his subject's trust to rule. The innovation in *Analects* 12.7 probably took its cue therefore from Mencius. If so, then it means that *zhongxin* was at one time tied to a status-specific relation.[4] At one time, syntax and grammar would disallow the expression "a loyal king" (loyal to his task) or a "trusting populace" (approving such a king). This rule should not be overplayed because of a situation in (b).

In a time of war, (b) the warrior elite was united behind—devoted to—a common cause. In battle, the trust between the leader and the led had to be mutual. Under attack from the enemy, a general and a private become comrade-in-arms utterly reliant (trusting) one another. The same circumstance also means that trust cannot be universal. Even though the noble leaders on both sides observed certain rules of honor (viz. you do not flog a captured general, not even in WWII), it was also understood that the use of deceit was perfectly legitimate (cf. the D-Day landing on the Normandy Beach). There was no reason to "trust" one's enemy. Things change when we move into (c).

In times of peace, (c) *zhongxin* can be remade into a civilian virtue, eventually becoming the mark of "integrity and truthfulness" as noted above. That probably began with the warrior's camaraderie being replicated among friends or comrades-in-peace. For the Confucian gentleman, that might translate into the fellowship of the literati in their new scholar-official capacity and class. But a further extension of *zhongxin* could become what is now known as *zhongshu* 忠恕, the so-called "one thread" running through all of Confucius' teaching.

In (d), *zhongshu* became a universal virtue; it is the Golden Rule. Reciprocity meant then "What one does not desire, do not inflict upon others." Written as "alike + mind," *shu* 恕 is read now as "of like mind." This reads like Mencius' notion of *ren* as empathy. Mencius probably inherited it from Confucius since the formula is found in the "early *Analects*." But he might also have inspired the lineage of Confucians at Lu to claim it as the "one thread" in the "middle *Analects*" and thereafter.[5]

I hold the *zhongshu* formula suspect though and would suggest that it was a rewrite of *zhongxin*. The reason for my so saying is that (1) *shu* was not a designate virtue before. Had it been, the Neo-Mohists who took care to explain various moral terms would include this word in their lexicon; they did not. Furthermore, (2) we do not find *shu* in any binominal virtues other than *zhongshu*, nor does it appear in other lists of multiple virtues. More fundamentally, *shu* as a verb means "to forgive; to show mercy; to excuse." Although it has been remade into the virtue of reciprocity, we still do keep a hierarchic use of the verb form. It takes a superior to forgive a subordinate. So only a king can pardon or show mercy (toward a subject). A son can feel sorry for his father. In his heart, he can even forgive wrongs done by his father. But publicly, a son cannot (may not presume a superiority as to) forgive his father; no such formal rite is available.[6] Now King Tang 湯 might take on the sins of his people and allow himself to be baked by the hot sun. In that prayer for rain, he might beg Heaven's forgiveness on behalf of his subjects. But kings did not ask forgiveness from subjects any more than seek their approval to rule as king. Typically when a sorry father and a

[4] See for example *zhongxiao* 忠孝, loyalty toward the ruler and filiality toward the parents; or *xiaodi* 孝悌, serving the elderly above and taking care of the youngster below.

[5] The golden rule of *Analects* 12.2 is identified as *shu* in *Analects* 15.23; the conjunction of *zhongshu* is found in *Analects* 4.15. Brooks and Brooks put these after the Middle *Analects* (see Brooks and Brooks 1998: 137).

[6] Wives can forgive husbands in tales of "a broken mirror being made whole again." The man can kowtow before the woman and ask for her forgiveness and reconciliation. But marriage is a contract; father-son relationship is ascribed by inflexible rules of intransigent patriarchy.

wronged son (or other insoluble types of family grievances) need resolving, the parties do so under the auspices of a higher authority that both would bow to. So "under the ancestor's shadow," a spiritual medium (a pre-modern family therapist) is usually called in—they still do in Taiwan—to divine the will of those departed but very much alive "higher-ups." Those "significant others" regularly then asked the bickering descendants to preserve family harmony and make peace among themselves.

How did *zhongxin* get rewritten into *zhongshu*? A tentative hypothesis would be: Because friends are more equal, they are more open to mutual criticism as well as forgiveness. The *shu* reciprocity among friends was somehow generalized into *zhongshu* as a new formula. The hierarchic sense that the superior *shu* the inferior however persisted. In the *Doctrine of the Mean* 13.3, the Golden Rule is more often read by commentators as "not doing to those *below you* what you do not desire to receive from those *above you*." That hierarchic sense is built into the verb "to do" which implies an action from someone above to someone below. It connotes a generosity of spirit. That asymmetry attends the three standard illustrations of what *shu* means: it is what a ruler would show to a subject, a father to a son, an elder brother to a younger brother. I am not saying that *shu* was never intended to be among equals; our genealogy of morals only seeks to recall its original, less equal, inspiration.

3 The Semantics of Trust: The Paradigm Shifts of Speech, Name, and Mind

The virtue of *xin* was predicated on speech (*yan*), above all, personal speech, a promise given one to one. That ethos of an oral lore (*yanyu* 言語: *yan* 言 for short) would in time be challenged by an ethos based on a written culture of *mingzi* 名字 (name and script: but name for short). Further down the road of history, an ethos of *xinxing* 心性 (mind and nature) would try to rewrite the prior assumptions. We will lay out that historical sequence in the next section. For the moment, we are interested in the contention that rose among these three—speech, name, and mind—in the middle *Analects* and how that affected the discourse on *xin*.

The middle chapters revived an interest, not just in "words and deeds," but also in the "rightness due names" (*zhengming* 正名: the rectification of names). That theory of names in *Analects* 12.11 lists simply "ruler ruler, minister minister, father father, son son" (just eight characters). This "teaching of names" recalls the project of the Duke of Zhou. The Duke ended war and wrought a culture (*wenhua* 文化) of peace by "instituting rites and music." The rites helped formalize the feudal *mingwei* 名位, namely, title and rank, relationships. Thereupon, a noble person (*ren*) is as he was prescribed by the rites. In that golden age, performing up to ritual code (name) would bring about the "good society." Or so Confucius believed. Even as Zhou rule was in shambles, the Master hoped ardently to restore that Zhou ideal with his formula of *junjun chenchen, fufu zizi* 君君臣臣父父子子 (12.11). The formula left out the feudal five ranks (*wei* 位) and basically reduced society to the two "intrinsic and necessary good" of the family and the state. The Confucian scholars soon hoped to mediate the two poles as the new officer class. I believe the theory can still be defended as a viable virtue ethics. Namely, the state and the family are provable to be intrinsic goods *via negativa*, i.e. by seeing how being orphaned or being stateless is not as good. Thereupon, "ruler and subject, father and son" should work to further the common good ("good for both"). This can be accomplished by observing the principle of reciprocity—instead of abiding simply by the old feudal norms as Xunzi 荀子 would (Lai 1990).

Historically speaking, the ethos of name (impersonally prescribed status) undercut the ethics of speech (personally committed word). That does not mean that they were incompatible. In fact, precisely as the Zhou order based on "title and rank" collapsed, there was a need to depend more on an ethics of interpersonal commitment based on a person's word alone. Because Mencius had rebuilt ethics on an inner "nature and mind," the Lu Confucians who compiled chapters 12, 13, and 2 of the *Analects* and were known to be diehard ritualists committed to the "outer" form of the rites responded, in part, by restating the primacy of the rightness due name.[7] It was packaged in a dense formula to match the Mencian idealist reduction.[8] The "benevolent king" in *Analects* 12.7 who would forgo first strong arms, then even food supply, before he would the trust (*xin*) of his people, exemplifies another Lu emulation of the new style of discourse (see Brooks and Brooks 1998: 91).[9]

These middle chapters' interest in *yanxing* might however be due to more than just the Lu Confucians' fear of the pressure due bureaucrats in office. Not that there was no reason for them not to worry: the Lu Confucians were ritualists whose "song and dance" probably could not function too well as administrators.[10] But the *yanxing* debate had to have been influenced by the debate between Mencius and Gaozi 告子 on the primacy of mind vs. speech. Now Gaozi's position on *yan* has unfortunately been distorted by the Mencian reportage. The first thinker to come up with a theory of an "immovable mind," Gaozi was fashioning a moral integrity that would not be swayed by lesser considerations. The Zhou rule based on "name" being severely weakened, Gaozi was looking to personal *yan* as a new standard. A magistrate known for being just and impartial, Gaozi followed his own dictum of "never letting the passions rule the mind." That part Mencius had less trouble with. But when Gaozi said "never letting the mind act contrary to speech," Mencius could easily dispute that. To Mencius, it is clear that the moral intention is primary and is antecedent to the speaking thereof. Mencius would eventually find a Platonic solution: that the good within his mind somehow resonates with a transcendental Good. That cosmic resonance we do not see in Gaozi.

However, Gaozi was no less in a quest for a personal integrity based on "self-sufficiency" and "imperturbability" (two stoic virtues), although his solution was more Socratic than Platonic. Socrates lived and died for honor, trusting that one day Athens would recognize that he was truthful in his philosophy and crown him with the honor due him. Socrates did not ground the *daemon* that inspired him in some cosmic *daemon*, some flood-like ether of Mencian righteousness. Now the word *yan* covers both the "honor" and the "philosophy" (speech) that Socrates lived by. Likewise, to live by *yan* for Gaozi meant "doing the right (i.e. the honorable) thing" and be known (in public acclaim) for doing so. *Yan* here involves an objective standard (outer righteousness), a personal philosophy (Gaozi's formula itself), and a social reputation (this worldly honor). *Yan* is here no longer the old *yan* that went with particular "promise keeping" at the heart of *xin* (trust). It is a generalized *yan* (reputation) tied to personal integrity (*yi* 義, righteousness) that comes with

[7] Note also that the (full) "rectification of name" thesis in *Analects* 13.3 (pushed to chapter 19 by the Brooks) is Xunzi-esque. Mencius rectified, not name, but mind. He was for making sincere the intention.

[8] "Singular formula" involves finding single-cause explanations for the evils of the world and then offering equally singular solution. If lack of love causes war and harm, then love would bring peace and benefit. See Lai 1995.

[9] The proto-Legalist (Guanzi 管子) would stress arms and food. The Mohists would probably find love and trust with no concern for a sufficient food supply a mite too idealistic.

[10] First suggested by Herbert Fingarette (Fingarette 1972), this image of Confucius or rather the Lu Confucians has been—almost unbelievably—confirmed by Robert Eno (Eno 1990).

"doing the right thing." In practice, it meant not being swayed by the mind's inclination or the instinct's desires, as illustrated by him with the prospect of enjoying a good meal. The instincts would grab the food for oneself; that would make the self happy. The mind (by which he meant the natural feeling of kin) would have the person deferring his own gratification by first helping his younger brother to his meal first; this would make the child happy. However, social etiquette would have us offer the first bite of food to the most elderly member (a non-kin) at a village feast; we do that for his enjoyment. That being the right thing to do, Gaozi would not begrudge (he would be no less happy that) the elder enjoying the meal. The standard of joy is invoked because joy, an end in itself, is ever so contagious so that *eudaemonia* is to the well-being of the whole community (Lai 1984).

Even though this discourse is on *yan* and not on *xin*, it has implications for a genealogy of morals. A man of honor like Gaozi lived for honor. Honor is social and outer; but it is the "for-what?" that moves man to action. It is an extension of the virtue of *xin* ("man + word") except that it is not a promise made in speech to others. It is an unspoken promise made to oneself. It is the integrity of the gentleman who vows "never to fail the world" (of honor) —"even if the world should fail us." The last clause is important. Because Athens was in decline (it was politically unstable), Socrates could not count on being dealt with justly, but still he persisted teaching despite criticism and accusation. Late Zhou was alike: the standard of name and the decency of promised recognition (reward for virtue) were wanting, but a Gaozi would do what a man of honor (*yan*) would do. In spirit, like Socrates would to Plato, this righteous magistrate was closer to Mencius than Mencius would grant him. In substance, there was a gulf. Gaozi accepted the system of honor of his time; Mencius, like Plato, would dream up a better society, a more just Republic or a more benevolent King.

4 An Archaeology of Trust: Oral Oath and Written Covenant

The ideologues of *xin* or the philosophical school that made most of this virtue was the Agrarians. These primitivists idealized a small-size, face-to-face, farming community ruled over by Shennong 神農, the "Divine Peasant," where everybody knows everybody such that trust came all too naturally. It was a classless society since the king was himself a farmer and his queen a weaver like most farmers' wives. That society knew no war, no standing army, and no use of war chariots (those and other carriages just lay around unused). Writing having not yet been invented, there were no edicts, no instructions, no law, no incarceration or punishment. Everything associated with recent high culture known to the men of the Warring States period was unknown to Shennong such that this Utopia of simpletons was dreamt up by thinkers unhappy with the evils that attended cultural advancement. Yet it is to these Utopians we owe the picture we drew above, namely about how an ethos of speech was overtaken by one based on name: "In former times, under Shennong there were no restrictions or commands[11] but the people followed him; [later] under Yao and Shun there were restrictions and commands but no punishments. The House of Xia 夏 Emperor kept their words;[12] the men of Yin 殷 (Shang 商) swore oaths; the men of Chou [Zhou] made (written[13]) covenants" (in Graham 1989: 67).[14]

[11] Elsewhere, it is said neither rewards nor punishment.

[12] Sometimes that virtue of *xin* was moved up to the Xia dynasty when people were simple and honest. With culture came refinement but with such decor, also dishonesty.

[13] In triplicates, one is sent up to heaven; one buried in earth; one pitched into the rivers.

[14] Characterized elsewhere as "exercising restraint with no resort to punishment" which amounts to ruling by rites (that restrain) and not by law (that punishes). But that is also a sign of a weak covenant

The romantic picture above is not exactly a history of what happened, but it is not without its ounce of poetic truth. If some face-to-face society knew pure trust, that could be just because it is hard to lie if everybody knows everybody. Since trust usually assumes some kind of explicit promise about getting something done, that idyllic society wherein every person attends to his plot of land and finds little occasion to plot and plan is "trustworthy" only because concerted actions were few and far in between. We do not usually associate "trust" as a virtue of the family. There is surely implicit trust among family members but a family that functions as an economic unit does not need to make verbal promise. Brothers do not need to swear an allegiance to one another. An oath is necessary only when there is a clear distinction between us and them, as when two different families decided to unite in marriage. A simple marriage oath would then be sworn before the gods (a third party set above the two parties). To enforce that contract when no other power existed to enforce it, one typically evokes a divine sanction and for good measure, an ultimate one (death). As family-village rose to becoming, say, Greek city states, there would evolve written legal legislation, or in the case of China, some kind of written ritual "covenant" that would be binding. Usually by now, the city would police itself or the feudal lords would be taking collective action against a violator of that contract. Crucial to the transition from a sworn Oath to a written Covenant would be the invention of writing. Although late Shang China already knew scripts, the high culture of writing (*wen* as a virtue) is usually associated with the Zhou, especially with the regency of the Duke. The Zhou covenant united a larger number of peoples than anything before, such as the Mosaic covenant would unite the twelve tribes into a single polity.[15] Such written documents are mythopoetically "set in bronze" or "carved into stone," those metal and rock being a symbol of permanence. In China, the Five Classics were supposed to be "books" compiled in early Zhou; the name "classics" means "permanent."

If we schematize that developments for the Three Dynasties, this is the picture we deduce from the Agrarian vision of history:

Era	Soc. Stage	Coherence Mode	Major Virtue	Gellner
Xia	Family	Nonverbal Trust	*Pu* 樸, Simplicity	Plough
Shang	Village	Formal Oral Oath	*Shi* 實, Honesty	Sword
Zhou	City-State	Written Covenant	*Wen* 文, Refinement	Book

The columns are constructed loosely as follows: first, three dynasties; then Aristotle's three-stepped evolution of society; then the Agrarian Utopians' threefold scheme; then a trio of virtues frequently assigned to the three dynasties; and finally, from Ernest Gellner's book title, plough (farmers), sword (a warrior elite), and book (classical culture) (Gellner 1988).[16] It is not meant to be a perfect alignment. The ahistoricty of some of the ideal-typal constructs should not rob them of their heuristic utility. The discussion in the last section—on how name displaced speech—corresponds to the shift from Oath to Covenant.

Although Oath is aligned with Shang, we will get a better idea of how the dynamics of speech and writing work if expediently we tie the oath with the War Oath sworn by the

[15] If the Decalogue lists a lot of "Thou shalt not," that is because the twelve (once separate and distinct) tribes had each its own customs, so that it was easier to agree on what not to do than on what to do. The more culturally unified they became later, the more the Levites could define and refine the list of the Do's.

[16] I am indebted to Andrew Huxley, in an exchange on the topic of oath, covenant and law within the Warring States Workshop group headed by Bruce Brooks, for a lead to using the schema of Gellner here. See WSW message archive # 3193, 3194 and 3195, 3239.

various tribes led by King Wu 武 of Zhou in a common cause to overthrow the Shang. The ethos of war would be the ethics of *zhongxin*: united devotion to the cause and mutual reliance among comrades-in-arms, viz. "one for all and all for one." King Wu at that point was just "first among equals." Only with the pacification of rule under the Duke would *zhongxin* be remade into loyalty to the Son of Heaven above from all his subjects below. The rites instituted by the Duke would ensure that, because a function of rites is to "distinguish superior and inferior." A written covenant often changes even the once simple oath sworn before heaven.[17] A covenant (*yue* 約) restrains (*yue* 約), which in the case of the Zhou was accomplished by the rites. The virtue of *xin* changes with these modes of social contract. In the Agrarian utopia, it was implicit: everyone helped everyone without saying a word. At the time of the war oath, it was mutual trust and reliance while on the front-line. At the time of the Zhou, it was hierarchic compliance. With Confucius, it was spread laterally especially among friends. With Gaozi, it became a function of honor and living up to a personal code of conduct. In Mencius, it would become a sincerity of intent and truthfulness to Heaven.

5 Friendship in an Unfriendly Age: Paragons and Parodies of *Xin*

In the Warring States period when feudal *mingwei* 名位 meant nothing, when promises were no sooner made than broken, friendship became more valued as a haven from the overt treachery of the time. As the Zhou covenant collapsed, the oath was revived, for oath is not just pre-covenant, it was also extra-legal.[18] Warriors needed it in war. Outlaws (like the Mafia) living outside the law inhospitable to them counted on the blood oath for self-protection and self-policing.[19] The underclass sought it out for mutual aid. Regular and mainline society held such sworn brotherhoods suspect; the Chinese family and state regularly warned against them. The courts of the land did not appreciate the appeal to supernatural sanctions like "May lightning strike me if I..." either. But among the Warring States themselves, such personal oaths and secret alliances were being cultivated. The *Zhanguo Ce* 戰國策 is supposed to be about the *ce* 策 (strategies) of that warring period. Tales of intrigue, their successes and failures, lent credence to this handbook on (to wit) "how to make friends and influence people." It mixes morality with practicality, such as with one famous tale known as "Feng Xuan *mai renyi* 馮諼買仁義," which tells of how one can buy up *renyi* 仁義 (Confucian humaneness and righteousness) with cool deliberation of its future (projected Mohist) benefit.[20]

From this source came the exemplary tale of *xin* known as the "steadfastness (*xin*) of Wei Sheng 魏勝." We do not know how or why Wei Sheng was chosen to be so lionized. All this native of Qi did was give his word to meet this girl at a bridge. The time came; the water rose; and the lady—as usual—was late. Refusing to move from the spot,

[17] The original "Last Supper"—if that was historic—was fairly simple. It was not performed with the degree of fanfare of the high Mass.

[18] The simplest kind of social contract can be accomplished without legal rules or with minimal rites, such as with informal "gift-exchange."

[19] The Mafia rose out of new Italian immigrant minorities not well served by the law (staffed by previous immigrants such as the Irish); likewise the L.A. gangs would so perceive the corrupted L. A. police. Their blood oath invokes divine sanction but by the time these outlaws grew so large as to have its own *mingwei* hierarchy, and the Godfather would have hit men to administer those sanctions. Economic covenant and political necessity may "rub out" family and kin—Hollywood style.

[20] In the story, a steward to a lord "forgave the debts" peasants owed his lord, thus "sowing good will" that provided safe haven for his lord later. See Eric Henry's message in the WSW message archive #3021-3024.

Wei Sheng drowned while clinging to a pillar. How much of this story is fact is hard to tell; that is of secondary importance. Like the lives of saints, hyperbole is the rule. The drama of what ought outweighs what is. Wei Sheng kept faith—as others did not—to a fault. If Gaozi lived by a fairly reasonable code of honor (*yan*), it seems that a more excessive Wei Sheng died somewhat needlessly for it.[21]

Now there is a Weisheng 微生 in *Analects* 5.24 (5.23 in some different editions; in Brooks and Brooks 1998: 26). The script Wei (微 instead of 魏) is different but the lesson is similar enough that most scholars think it is the same person. There Wei Sheng also lived up to code. He is "upright" (generous) as the other is "steadfast." Both point to his being trustworthy. But here, it is about a neighbor coming to borrow a cup of vinegar. Weisheng, caught with none would go and borrow a cup from a neighbor to comply. Generous to a fault, he might be mocked by cynics today: it was all "borrowed generosity." Book 29 of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, titled "Robber Zhi 盜跖," mocked him for drowning just to make a name for himself. Life is precious; fame is not; so it is sheer folly to trade one for the other. The same charge can be easily filed against Gaozi if Gaozi is caricatured as one living just for the sake of garnishing for himself a good public reputation. If so perceived, then Gaozi only lived for name and fame.[22]

Below are more paraphrased stories of faithful friendship from the classical period: (1) From Sima Qian's 司馬遷 *Biography of Guan Zhong* 管仲: A long soap opera wherein Bao Shuya 鮑叔牙 went out of his way to protect, connive, cajole, and shepherd Guan Zhong to becoming the chief minister of Qi. He even willingly served as his subordinate and for that, he won Guan Zhong's admission that "no one knew me as well as (this life-long friend of his)." For that, Bao's descendants were in turn well provided for at Qi. People credit Bao's role as a patron for ensuring Zhong's success more than they would even Zhong's inherent talent; (2) From the *Spring and Autumn Annals Commented on by Master Lü*: Harpist Yu Boyai (俞伯牙) broke his zither at the death of his friend because his friend alone could *zhiyin* 知音 (recognize what his music was evoking): "He knows my heart"; (3) From Sima Qian's *Biography of Wu Taibo* 吳泰伯: Roving ambassador Ji Zha 季札 had a beautiful ceremonial sword that his host, Prince Wu, clearly liked. He needed it for his career and could not part with it. On a return trip, finding the Prince had passed away, he hung the sword on his grave. When asked why (the ado since the man is dead), he said, I so promised it him in my heart (see Li 1967: 369-371).

All three stories involve being "trust and true," but they may also reveal other underpinnings. The first is probably told to show how, in that age of self-advancement, office-seeking friends should help promote one another's upward mobility. The warmth of friendship between the pair aside, the rewards of patronage were never too far from their mind. The second is about artists who proverbially need no words to communicate. *Yin* 音 (sound, music) precedes *yan* (speech). It being closer to the heart, he who knows the *yin* of another knows well his heart.[23] If the first case is rational-public, this tale is emotive-private; one is political as the other is a mite unrealistic. The third case combines both aspects. As a tale of patronage, Ji Zha was guest as the prince was host. Etiquette would require the guest to repay the host. Unable to part with his insignia sword, Ji Zha repaid him only at the prince's grave—a bit belatedly. No deep friendship of the heart needs to be

[21] I am indebted to the discussion on Wei Sheng within the WSW group with Bruce Brooks, Anne Kinney, Eric Henry, Paul Goldin et al; see message archive # 2996, 3000, 3004, 3009, 3019 and passim.

[22] That is how Mencians would judge Gaozi, that he was just a *xiangyuan* 鄉愿 (village worthy). Shakespeare's Mark Anthony so mocked the "honorable men" that killed Caesar too.

[23] Compare this: two bridge players play a system known only to them, so when one dies, the other would also hang up his cards for good. The two do not have to be deep friends.

involved here. Had the prince known Jı Zha well, he would have known better than to make his desire known. Were Jı Zha his confidante, the news of his death would have been communicated to him earlier. We may never know what actually prompted Jı Zha's final act. But hidden motives are irrelevant here; the lesson rests with the overt reason given. No one pressured Jı Zha for a parting gift. No utility is served by it either. With no public promise made, it was a promise he made, supposedly in his heart to the prince, but it was a promise ultimately made to himself. Mencians might read that as indicating a sincerity of intent, but Jı Zha, I trust, lived more by the standard of Gaozi.

6 The Divide between Idealist and Realist: Stoicism in the Age of the Empire

Our coverage is approaching the end of the classical period. To conclude this history of an idea, we will trace briefly two final formulations of this virtue *xin*. The two could not be more different. One is the most idealist: it sees a basic sincerity in man and reality. The other is most realist: it has a cynical view of man and world. The first, coming from the Mencian school, is found in the text *Doctrine of the Mean*. The latter is condensed in a Legalist formula on how to get people to behave properly.

The *Doctrine of the Mean* has inherited the discourse on *zhongshu* (integrity and reciprocity as the one thread) but reformulated that into *zhongyong* 中庸 (centrality and the mean). It opens with "What heaven ordains is called human nature." It accepts the Mencian equation of the external Good of Heaven and the innate Good of Man. Though it voices aphorism concerning "speech" and "promise-keeping," it grounds morality, not in an outer contract but in a "sincerity of intent." It rectifies the mind more than it rectifies name or reality. A key, new and totalistic, concept for the good in this text is *cheng* 誠 ("speech + to complete"). A synonym of *xin* ("man + speech") in the standard lexicons, it would supersede *xin* for good in later Neo-Confucian moral discourse.

Cheng describes the good, the true, and, when completed, the beautiful (as seen in the order of the cosmos). It links the inner and the outer, being the sincerity of mind and good innate to the cosmos. In a Platonic move worthy of what Gellner attributes to a meta-reflection that a book culture made possible, sincerity in the hearts of men is in tune with the sincerity that is the essence of reality. This is no longer the limited virtue of *xin* due *homo politicus*; it is the *logia* of man being fused to a transcendental *logos* seeking its own completion.

xin	(man + speech)	what man promises in words, he would duly do
cheng	(speech + complete)	what Heaven gave birth to, man duly completes.

In one fundamental sense, this new ideology of sincerity is the ultimate rationalization of the Zhou presumption of a Mandate of Heaven. What Heaven mandates or wills (as the good) is what all moral men—not just King Wen—should bring to fruition. That historic summon to conquest has been remade into a natural law to make right. The "naturalistic" aspect that fuses the natural and the normative was supplied by another Zhou ideology, the notion that Heaven also gave birth to all things. The Will of Heaven metaphorically flows in all things. It imparts into things their individual principle (*li* 理*:* their *raison d'être*) and into man their nature and reason for living (*xing* 性: an innate good). In that teleological worldview, it befalls on man to "complete" what Heaven had commanded and seeded. The *telos* of all things is built into their *de facto* existence. In this ethics grounded in Confucian humanism, Heaven proposes, Man disposes.

This is the apex of Mencian "moral idealism." Its understanding of virtue so conflated function and fruition, the given and the telos, man and thing, as well as culture and nature, that it stood in sharp contrast to the "amoral realism" being championed by the Legalists. Tutored by Xunzi 荀子, Li Si 李斯 and Han Fei 韓非 kept distinct what Mencius had conflated. Xunzi was a nominalist when it comes to the "rectification of names" for things. He was nomic—subscribing to the standards set down by the wisdom of tradition (former sages)—when it came to the names or norms for social living. The Legalists took their cue from the nominalism of the former; discarded the rites that rested just on tradition; and substituted that with the "laws of the ruler" in all political contingencies. The truth of names is variable. An emperor can decide to call a deer a "horse" on a whim, provided that it proves advantageous to his policy and does not harm his reputation. The power of the king serves the ultimate source of authority. We will not go into the details of Legalist thought or their new design on the social virtues. To show how the word *xin* was appropriated by them, we need only to take up a Legalist slogan: "credible (*xin*) reward" but "sure (*bi* 必) punishment." Holding humans in contempt (who are basically as Freud would find them, namely, greedy for pleasure and lazy), the Legalists deemed that the only way to mobilize a population is to dangle reward before men so they would act in a certain way and then threaten them with punishment if they do not. In this use of the carrot and the stick, the carrot has to be credible but the stick is a guaranteed surety. The reason? Because people greedy after gain fear punishment even the more. (Greed requires some effort; men are so lazy that inertia alone might deter them from doing anything.) To exploit human weakness, the offer of a reward should be credible enough so that people would put in enough effort and think they could get it. They might not, but it is required that they think they could. (Our state lottery works on that principle.) But nothing moves men more than the avowed punishment for non-compliance. Fear would overcome any inertia and quiet any complaint.

Known for telling the ruler to "keep his words" so that laws could be enforced to the letter and "not to change his mind too often" lest he be perceived as inconsistent, the Legalists insisted on accountability based on task assigned. Performance (*shi* 實) should accord with name (*ming*). But they were also ready and willing to use lies and deceit to get things done. The end justifies the means. Li Si 李斯 even plotted the death of fellow student and Legalist Han Fei 韓非, which is not an act that would inspire much trust. The idealist and the realist positions described above seem to be polar opposites, but their currency actually went hand in hand in their time. The Legalists helped to build the first Empire in China but in the process left many moralists feeling adrift in the new mass society, now the Empire loomed so large as to appear inhospitable and alienating. Empires also rose in the Hellenistic world, and the Stoics learned to adjust to the new situation. They accepted the relativity of *nomos* (law) that went with different *polis*, city states. Those states being not absorbed under the Empire, the Stoics counted on the *logos* of their mind to ground itself in the *logos* of the cosmos.[24] They were the first cosmopolitans, at home in the larger universe than that of the political state. Although the *Da Xue* 大學 (*Great Learning*) claims to bridge the gap between family and state—there being no real tradition of the *polis* in China prior to the rise of the Empire—the *Doctrine of the Mean* provided what seems to be the same Stoic comfort. It found an "inner" sincerity that is one with the Sincerity of Heaven and Earth.[25] Less outgoing than a Seneca and less

[24] Note that "free will" is not set against "necessity" here, for like *logos* would to *physis*, freedom here is being tuned to nature.

[25] Sincere intent should not be read as the Kantian good will. It is more like the virtue of conscentiousness. Mencius still lived in a ritually defined universe.

geared for battle compared with a Marcus Aurelius, the gentleman of this text who so prized solitude seems to rest contented that he could know the affairs of the world without ever leaving his room. What that says of the inner kingdom of nature and mind is best left for speculation.[26] Our coverage will end here but for an appendix [optional].

7 The Extension of Trust and the Limit to Sociability: The Cretan Liar

The brief history of the concept of *xin* above is meant to be party to a study in virtue ethics. It assumes that virtues create the kind of good society that a community hopes to live up to. It follows that the list of virtues would change in time as society change—and vice versa. In the larger scheme of things, modernity with its modernist ethics that repealed classical and medieval virtue ethics ended up with a list of virtues (so to say) that was supposed to create a new kind of society it hoped would be good. The "good society" seems however to be elusive and in post-modern retrospect, virtue ethicists begin to question the feasibility of its claims and the justice of its assumptions. So how may classical China's virtue ethics speak to us today across the chasm of time?

The problem that faced classical society seems to be not that different from those facing modern society, or so our retrieval of that history might show. The virtue of *xin* had changed during that classical span of time, as may be summarized below:

Shang	Zhou Uprising	Zhou Rule	Chaos & Empire
1. Pragmatic oath of word/deed	2. Ideal of moral King appointed by moral Heaven	3. Prescriptive covenant of title and rank	4. Mencian idealism hand in hand with Legalist realism

As tied to speech, *xin* was originally the virtue of deed matching word or promise-keeping. Its performance in (1) was specific and particularistic (reliant on whom and for what end?). It was not yet a generalizable and universal virtue. Tied to pledges between man and man, it found its highest expression (one drawing in the larger number of people) quite naturally in the formation of a new political entity. *Xin* thus underwrote in (2) the confederation of tribes that sworn to a war Oath that brought an ailing Shang dynasty down. In war, one kept faith (*xin*) with one's allies and not trusting the enemy, used one's wits and wiles to deceive and defeat the foe. Being truthful or honest did not mean not lying always. The Zhou campaign was however inspired by a higher ideal than a limited ethos, to use a Nazi-revived term, of "blood (lineage) and soil (locality)." The right to rule now involves a transferable Mandate from a moral Heaven which is impartial. In theory and in time, the Mandate would be open

[26] The issue is too large to deal with here. China did not draw the homology Plato drew between the self and the state. Plato's tripartite soul informs the make-up of the Republic with its wise philosopher, its courageous guardians, and its temperate producers. Mencius knew only elite who use their mind and commoners who slave with their muscles. The standard homology is that the ruler is the mind-heart and the officials are the five organs (*wuguan* 五官 has that *double entendre*). But the Greek citizens legislated and the Roman senate drew up laws for a mixed population living together. China pitted familial moral rites against imperial immoral law. Confucian ritualists trusted not law but a politics of good manners: teach the non-Han people the proper deportment and they would become willing Han subjects. French state-craft under Louis XIV also trusted a civilizing by good manners as the court worked to make civil the uncouth warrior nobility. No more private duels and private feuds, no more oaths sworn before local saints, not when there was the *religion royale* of one Saint Louis for all regions under his reign (more if we count the pious but costly Crusades that were for Christendom more than for France).

to all men under Heaven as to end up in the Mencian idealism of the *Doctrine of the Mean* (as registered in the diagram above).

That transformation came about by way, initially, of (3). The Duke of Zhou consolidated rule by way of rites and music, replacing a war Oath with a Covenant of peace. It superimposed the status ethics of "title and rank" over the performative ethics of "words and deeds." This became the foundation of Confucian *mingjiao* 名教; the theory of "rectification of names" would expect performance of ascribed role up to the ideal of code. However, because within the five human relationships, that among friends was most open and free, voluntaristic and non-scripted, it preserved and promoted a virtue of mutual trust and mutual edification best. When Confucius opened up the status of *ren* (nobility) to all men and made it into the highest good, he also set the pace for *xin* to become the foundational virtue for all social life. If *ren* was no longer tied to a class, *xin* was likewise unanchored from any one goal of any particular community. The philosopher-king in Plato's *Republic* might have to have the requisite of wisdom, but everyone, the king, the guardians, and the producers, would have to observe alike the honesty of not lying for no communal life is possible if people cannot be truthful. Now *xin* covers but means more than honesty; as sincerity, it would also connote concern.

Now if Confucius so assumed that truthfulness and humaneness are requisite of all humanity, then Mozi 墨子 would be the one to bring those two virtues together in his call to "loving all men" equally and truthfully. Mohists would love even strangers, those people "behind the wall," viz. unseen or unknown to us.[27] But if classical humanism reached its maximal extension here, it would also run into an ethico-logical problem: the limit of sociability. This may best be illustrated with a new reading of the Cretan Liar in Greek thought.[28]

Ephimenides was a Cretan who lived in the sixth century BCE who reportedly remarked that all Cretans were liars. Since he was himself a Cretan, how is one to read that statement? If true, then the fact that he made that statement would prove how not all Cretans lie. Books, I have been told, have been written on how to solve this logical impasse. A genealogy of morals would see it as something more than a logical problem. The issue is more so moral and political. Since Crete was Myceanean, racially speaking Ephimenides would not be Greek or Indo-Aryan. Being non-Aryan (*aryan* means noble), he would at one time not be counted as "noble" or in Chinese, *ren*. Let us suppose Ephimenides had slipped past a Greek border guard posted at the border to wean out illegal immigrants. He passed through customs by appeasing the guard, namely, repeating a racist slur that "all Cretans are liars." Suppose, like a present-day Mexican named Jose Ephimenides who later became a naturalized citizen of the United States, this Cretan was accepted later as a naturalized Greek citizen (he was accepted and respected in the enlightened forum of the *polis*), should he then be deported for initially entering the country under false pretenses (by lying to that INS official)? If this is an issue of logic, then indeed the Immigration and Naturalization Service would have a hard time proving that lie. But if we deconstruct this incident as an "Uncle Tom" story, the fault is not with his attempted appeasement of the border guard's bigotry; the untruth lies in that racist slur

[27] Morality is a matter of Logic to Mozi, but the Sophists would use that against him. GONGSUN Long 公孫龍 of the "white horse not horse" fame argued that since to love and benefit X involves disprivileging non-X, loving all (with none to disprivilege) is loving none. HUI Shi 惠施, noting how categories are indiscreet ("a white dog is black"), would love all things—and not benefit man in particular.

[28] I owe references to Ephimenidea to discussions in the WSW; see message archive # 3069, 3071, 3073, 3014, 3015, 3016, especially by Anne Kinney, Douglas Hendersen, and Huan Saussy.

born of a one-time Aryancentrism. It was a problem that came with the Greek Enlightenment and the birth of Humanism among the classical thinkers who came to extend "nobility" to all men—Greeks and Cretans alike. Whereas at one time, Greeks only trusted Greeks and considered all Cretan liars (like some bigots would still say "Mexican low life"), the classical thinkers had come around to see that the virtue of honesty was due all humans and not the monopoly of the Aryans.

In other words, the case of the Cretan Liar posted not so much a timeless challenge to a Greek mind ruled by logic. When it became a topic of philosophical conversation is when classical society learned to accept a truth about our common humanity, that we should treat all men as being equally trustworthy and true. At a time when the United States which once welcomed the poor and the wretched to its shores is now rethinking its immigration policy, the issue of the Cretan Liar is more than academic. Back then in classical China, the Neo-Mohist ethicists were tested with a similar problem. If humanity is infinite, can we love so infinitely? (Since Mohists believe in dividing benefits equally, the problem is how to divide anything into infinite portions.) The Neo-Mohists came up with a solution that would not pass muster among logicians today.[29] But similar to what we said above of the Cretan Liar, it is not the head but the heart that counts in the moral side of that discourse. If elsewhere the Mohists could count the harm and benefits and declare, not so lovingly, that killing Robber Zhi—the legendary marauder who pillaged and plundered and never did anyone any good—is not killing a man, we have a foretaste of the limit of sociability that even an avowed "lover of all men" would admit. Like Bin Laden, the robber as *persona non grata* is being reclassified as a non-person. Killing him is not killing a man. The political realism of the Legalist is making its presence felt here. But then in step with the Mohists, the Mencian answers about people rising up and deposing a tyrant is that he heard a tyrant being deposed—he did not hear of a king being killed. (Regicide is against the code of ritual names.) As virtue ethics confronted those issues back then, we do so again today. And in the end, the criterion has to be the picture of the good society that virtues help to inscribe and/or the justice ethics, modern or traditional, seeks to actualize.

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Appendix: The Robber Zhi Chapter

WEI Sheng, the paragon of *xin* who willingly drowned just to keep a date, was mocked by the author of the "Robber Zhi" chapter in the *Zhuangzi*. The criticism was embedded in a long Primitivist diatribe indicting the evils wrought by sage-kings and high culture in general. The writer had conjured up a fictive exchange between Confucius representing high morals and the legendary Robber Zhi who stood for "public enemy number one." Confucius, who lectured the robber on virtue, ended up being soundly lectured by the robber instead. Although the discourse has only incidental bearing on our topic of *xin*, it

[29] Can one divide finite goods among an infinite count of humanity? Yes. Draw an imaginary circle for the infinite and put all humanity inside it. If it fills the circle, humanity has a limit; if it does not fill the circle, humanity also has a limit.

does touch on the genealogy of morals or how the ethics of conquest is not the ethics of rule.

Confucius in this chapter is the defender of rule trying to change the ways of Robber Zhi who was terrorizing the feudal lords with his mighty, roving band of thieves, living the code of a marauder. Confucius began by retelling a hierarchy of three virtues:

> To grow up tall and big, to be perfectly handsome and good, to please everyone that sees him, be they young or old, honored or lowly—this is to have superior virtue. To have knowledge that ties together heaven and earth, to be able to dispute on all manners of things—that is to have middling virtue. To be brave and bold, to be decisive and daring, to gather in multitude and lead on troops—this is to have inferior virtue. Whoever has one of these virtues is capable of facing south [rule as Shun did] and style himself 'solitary' [an attribute solely of the king]. (Victor Mair 1994: 300)

Though not specifically named, the trio of virtues corresponds to the set of *ren*, *zhi* 智, and *yong* 勇(nobility, wisdom, and courage, better remembered in the sequence of wisdom, nobility, and courage). By that account, the robber has only raw courage, the lowest of the three. But that was enough to make the marauder a king. Ever so diplomatic, Confucius actually showered the robber with possessing all three virtues—only to hedge that praise by noting the bad reputation Zhi had garnished for himself:

> Now you, general, are someone who combines all three. Your person is eight feet two inches tall, your face is radiant, your lips are like shining cinnabar, your teeth are like even cowry shells, your voice is like the Yellow Bell, and yet you are named Robber Footpad. I must admit, general, that I am ashamed for you and cannot approve of this. (Victor Mair 1994: 301)

Confucius then offered to be his ambassador and initiate what we will nowadays call a PR (public relations) campaign. That would amount to, in the proper parlance, a "rectification of name." The purpose is to remake the "robber" into "king" or at least a respectable "feudal lord" among the feudal lords he was terrorizing. That would then turn marauder (read "conqueror") into emperor (read "ruler"). This being a late chapter suspected to have been composed in early Han, the historical context would be the rise of "banditry" (peasant rebellion) that brought the Qin 秦 down but which, ending with one such bandit coming to the throne as the Han emperor, meant a recasting of a "bandit" into a "king."

Speaking on behalf of a culture of peace succeeding the chaos of war, Confucius then recommended to Robber Zhi that he should "disband [his] troops and demobilize [his] soldiers." Now if Confucius was rehearsing the role of the Duke of Zhou, that would mean a consolidating of rule by instituting a reign based on "music and rites." That offer from the Master—realized later in Han history by Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 under Han Emperor Wu—was pretext enough for Robber Zhi to launch into an angry disputation, one involving a Primitivist condemnation of high culture, everything from the quest for fame (name) and gain (benefit) to government under sage-kings (whose wisdom wrought only folly). The Robber called for a repeal of *wen* (writing) and a return to a simple, preliterate, agrarian society. His speech ended on a Yangist note. With human beings given such a short life span in a cosmos so infinite, they would do better safeguarding what was given them than cut short their lives with all this needless hustling and bustling. That was the final message of the author of this chapter who fashioned this pretext of a fabled exchange so he might air his judgment on the times.

But authors do not create texts *ex nihilo*; they inherit and retell tales that as pre-texts might create sub-texts of their own. In the story, Confucius exaggerated the Robber's

virtues. The Robber might have the raw courage of a marauder but hardly the nobility or the wisdom deemed proper for a true king. In the story, the author has the Robber repudiating all such cultured benevolence and gentlemanly prudence as inauthentic garnishment. Yet the author himself overlooked the description of the Robber's gabled stature, beauty, and popularity. Those attributes, by a Nietzschean reading, show the Robber to be in actual full possession of those three virtues. How?

Virtue, says Nietzsche, at one time meant Power. Nobility then went with a warrior elite. *Ren*, by that token, described once the highborn, who naturally "grow up tall and big, to be perfectly handsome and good, and to please everyone that sees him, be they young or old, honored or lowly." Just like the gods and heroes that fought on both sides of the war in Homer's *Iliad*, none of those noble souls was ever short, ugly, or awful to behold. It may be sheer *hubris* but that (and other) ruling elite always think they were beloved by high and low alike. And although highborns could not be genetically predisposed to look "tall and handsome," that perception was as ingrained as the underclass (and a potential traitor like Brutus) would wear a "lean and hungry look." Are all "sons of warrior lords" born proverbially courageous? Scientifically speaking, no. But warrior societies would work to ensure, as Sparta did, the survival of those fit for war. (Nomads and hunters had no need to observe primogeniture; they choose the more able to lead them. Giving the first born a natural primacy is a luxury of the idle rich. A land-owning elite could be born short, fat, and ugly and still live off the fat of his land and the labor of others by relying on deputized rule.) By that warrior standard, a strong man like Robber Zhi who could rally men behind him would be deemed "tall and handsome" (as Attila the Hun would to his followers). And if he could be "daring and decisive" in battle, he would earn the kudos of possessing strategic wisdom (as Cao Cao 曹操 of the Three Kingdoms did). Since Robber Zhi was able to "gather in multitude and lead on troops," he may presume that virtue. Of course, in the story, Confucius who offered his own "wise counsel" to aid the robber, had a different idea of what constitute true wisdom. To him, it meant the "knowledge that ties together heaven and earth" and the ability "to dispute on all manners of things." The latter was the trademark of philosophers; the former was the promise of Zou Yan 鄒衍, that he could assure a conqueror a cosmological justification for a destined rule. At the time when this chapter of composed, the author could be seeking to offer his "Daoist" philosophy to a potential ("bandit") claimant to the throne, but that is a separate story better left to more skillful scholars in the field.[30]

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[30] The fact Liu Bang 劉邦 became in name King while Xiang Yu 項羽 languished hence as Bandit (the loser) could be informing this chapter. The chapter mocked how the big robber who stole a whole kingdom is honored, while the petty thief is condemned. For a reading tying it to the circle of Liu An 劉安, Prince Huainan 淮南子, see Bruce Brooks' (and others') communications in the WSW message archive, esp. # 3025, 3026, 3029, 3030, 3033.

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